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LC/NAIROB

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> "The harsh reality of State formation in post-colonial Africa is that, in many countries, the apparatus of governance has begun to crumble before it has been fully consolidated. There is a crisis of political authority that is just as severe as the well-known crisis of economic production.
>
> State-society relations now stand at a crossroads in Africa. The post-colonial trend to expand political control has peaked, with economic crisis forcing the State to retreat from overambitious commitments ... loosening regulations on economic production inevitably gives rise to pressures for political liberalization. To date, the enthusiasm of African political elites for economic reform does not seem to encompass a new commitment to civil liberties and democracy."
> Michael Bratton (1989a: 409 & 412. Emphasis added)

The appearance and proliferation of forms of "popular participation" in Africa at the level of politics are one of the few positive products of the continuing continental crisis. They are matched at the level of economics by the expansion and diversification of "informal sector" production and distribution. Together, such informal political and economic interactions and institutions are filling some of the social space vacated by the shrinking State and transforming at least the margins of African political economies (Shaw, 1985, 1988 & 1991).

This paper takes it to be axiomatic that such informal social organizations exist in a dialectical relationship both with the formal polity and with the formal economy. Moreover, just as formal institutions have external relations so do such informals. Thus "external impediments" are taken here to mean constraints which exist outside the popular sectors at both national and international levels; i.e., the internal and external political economies within which novel forms of popular participation and production are located. Hence the dialectical quality of the relations between the latter and the former: informal politics and economics are neither separate from nor similar to the formal sectors as constituencies and consumers are more immediate so accountability is more direct.

Both States and the State system exist in an ambiguous manner with the informals, at times attempting to control and co-opt, at others seeking to distance and divorce. Such contradictory and changeable external contexts are both an impediment but also an incentive to popular participation: if formal sectors were more consistent and concerned then informal politics and economics would become less vital and vibrant. As the crisis continues, however, so revisionist approaches to African political economy have been popularized in both analysis and praxis (Shaw, 1990 & 1991). I turn first to the internal and then to the international dimensions of informal politics and economics in Africa.

i. Revisionist notions of popular participation: beyond democracy

Popular participation is organically related to questions of human needs on the one hand and of human rights on the other. In terms of the first issue – informal sectors – such as small-scale, unrecorded, unlicensed and sometimes illegal trade is one adjunct of such participation as they are typically direct and democratic in structure. Moreover, they serve to undermine more formal sectors in the areas of both production and processes. But, popular participation is more than informal sectors. And second, human rights and constitutionalism are the more legal aspects of such participation, treated in section v) below: how do States and social values advance or retard it? These issues are more on the African agenda than ever before, in part because of international trends and inputs: do formal institutions assist or resist popular forms of participation and production?

The continental crisis has generated an innovative set of survival strategies, many of which entail forms of popular participation. Here I exclude the more coercive types of direct redistribution, such as urban crime, along with illegal international activities, such as drug-dealing or currency smuggling. However, myriad legal survival strategies have been discovered to enable families and communities to survive. These tend to be rural, female, communal and agricultural in character and have important technological, financial and ecological effects. They obviously have urban, male and industrial counterparts especially in States with a history of industrialization and urbanization. And both types are in fact often inseparable from more established, formal sector or official institutions, being animated or protected by familial or professional accomplices inside the political economy.

The appearance and resilience of such popular organizations in Africa have yet to be treated in most approaches to its political economy. Both modernization and materialist approaches tend to be conservative in their analysis of non-formal and economic forces, respectively. So even traditional interest groups, let alone non-governmental or informal organizations, pose difficulties for such orthodoxies as noted in section III below. Only more radical and revisionist scholars have been able to embrace such popular institutions be they developmental, ecological, feminist and/or religious. Yet the salience, size and scope of such informal organizations have clearly expanded as the continental crisis has continued and intensified.

So the proliferation of such social organizations has posed dilemmas in both analysis and praxis, undermining modernization and materialist approaches alike, as well as both right and left projects, despite attempts by some to incorporate them. For modernization approaches, popular and informal institutions do not conform to unilineal assumptions of exponential specialization and sophistication. And for materialist perspectives, they do not readily fit assumptions of antagonistic contradictions between labour and capital. Rather, they open up new possibilities of developmental coalitions and relations largely outside State or formal sector controls.

One central feature of such trends is a renewed interest in and redefinition of notions of pluralism and pragmatism from a variety of perspectives. The analysis of popular and informal organizations can be rendered more compatible or incompatible with established modes depending on degree of orthodoxy. For example, the modernization approach could accept them as a transitional stage, or reject them as subordinate to or subversive of formal institutions. Likewise, the materialist perspective could also accept them as a transitional stage towards more proletarianization or embourgeoisement, or otherwise reject them as unorganized, unconscious ameliorants of State or capital interests (see also section III).

Unfortunately, much of the current literature on democracy in Africa is still overly concerned with orthodox formal definitions and relations rather than with novel, informal organizations: traditional human rights rather than needs. This tends to be so whether the approach is radical (e.g., Anyang'Nyongo, 1987) or traditional (e.g., Oyugi, 1988). The latter, for example, is almost entirely preoccupied with national-level formal structures. Only two contributors treat substructural, subnational factors: Maria Nzomo (1988) on women's exclusion yet centrality and Michael Chege (1988) on development and democracy given the crises. The latter argues that the two are irrevocably interrelated, criticizing dependency as an excuse for underdevelopment and populism as an insufficient response. Chege (1988: 199) laments that "the hope of achieving development with democracy which saturated African nationalist rhetoric in the 1960s

was both misplaced and unrealistic," and suggests instead a focus on internal rather than external social forces. In particular, he calls for a distinctive African intellectual response to advance both realism and responsibility in the continental debate about democratic development.

It is important for both analysis and praxis that popular, informal organizations not be captured by any one analytic or partisan perspective. Thus the anti-materialist and -mercantilist rhetoric of a Hernando de Soto (1989) needs to be answered: he claims that Latin American capitalism is merchantilism, a State-dominated perversion. In both The Other Path and related activities of his Institute for Liberty and Democracy, de Soto uses the "informals" to challenge orthodox materialist and merchantilist thought. In calling for entrepreneurship and democracy, de Soto criticizes regressive State regulations, the Marxist rejection of the informals and the dependentistas' denial of indigenous, small-scale capitalism. He even claims that the informals challenge the cultural determinism of Latin America as well as the liberation theology of radical Catholics!

The populist inclinations of informal sector advocates should not be so high-jacked for anti-materialist or -State purposes. Informal sectors in Africa as elsewhere differ dramatically in their genesis, scale, function and impact. They challenge all developmental and theoretical assumptions, not just modernization, materialism and dependency, yet they do not by themselves eliminate any of them.

In short, the diversity of informal sectors and political economies in Africa means that informals are the monopoly of no one approach. They should not be appropriated by de Soto or any other advocate of either unfettered market forces or anarchistic democratic processes. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that one reason for their recognition and expansion has been extra-continental support, as symbolized not only by Bank-Fund condi-tionalities but also by the acclaim afforded to de Soto by Western financial and aid agencies such as USAID, the latest in a series of incomplete panaceas such as basic needs and appropriate technologies.

Recognition of and attention to the new range of informal and popular organizations should be, however, one central aspect of a revisionist mood apparent in Africa. The crises of the 1980s have served to undermine confidence in almost all established approaches to development (Shaw, 1991). And the decade-long stand-off between the World Bank and Economic Commission for Africa, structural adjustment and self-reliance, has not really resolved anything. The series of attempts at consensus has produced short-lived stalemates as the two positions have distinctive and incompatible roots and logics (Shaw, 1988). Hence the new willingness at the start of the 1990s to be truly "radical" and discard much of the now-irrelevant intellectual baggage. The analysis and practice of popular and informal organizations are one welcome indicator of this new realism and revisionism.

II. Realist notions of global context, beyond dependency

International conditions during the 1980s have both encouraged and constrained popular organizations in Africa. Amongst the positive global changes have been: (a) structural adjustment pressures to shrink the State; (b) advocacy of social change in favour of children, democracy, environment, human rights and women; (c) encouragement of transnational non-governmental organizations (NGOs), from Amnesty International, OXFAM and Save-the-Children to Band Aid; and (d) revisionist mood in East as well as

West, leading to a new scepticism about the efficacy of orthodox socialist strategies. In short, policy conditionalities, democratic, feminist and ecological coalitions, NGOs, and perestroika have together transformed the context for the new democracy in many African communities in a variety of formats.

However, the explosion of such popular organizations has also been constrained as well as advanced by international factors. Amongst these negative global forces have been: (a) Africa's continued underdevelopment in part caused by unfavourable terms of trade and debt; (b) the modest, as well as conditionality of external assistance for African NGOs from the West despite United Nations pleas; and (c) the paucity of such assistance from either East or South notwithstanding the existence of such linkages. In other words, because of multiple structural constraints, another path is still an imperative for the majority of Africa's peoples, especially more vulnerable women and youth. The constraining contexts of dependency, inequality and bureaucracy cannot be dismissed by advocates of informals. Retreat to non-formal arrangements is typically not by choice but rather out of necessity.

The contemporary ubiquity of informal sectors has now come to the attention even of the World Bank. Indeed, it almost claims credit for these sectors' expansion as a correlate of structural adjustment, anticipating that policy reforms will allow such small-scale activities to "graduate" into larger, more formal organizations. The World Development Review 1989 treats "informal finance" because of its crucial role in extending credit to the "non-corporate" sector of small farmers, independent traders, and marginal producers who can account for at least 10 per cent GDP and 50 per cent employment in many third world countries. WDR 1989 suggests that stereotypes of informal sector moneylenders are inappropriate as:

> ... informal finance is both extensive and diverse. The informal sector accounts for most of the financial services provided to the non-corporate sector (World Bank, 1989: 112).

As in other sectors of informal activities, the Bank advocates graduation within an open financial system: for example, "the linking of informal arrangements with co-operatives is becoming increasingly common in Africa" (World Bank, 1989:119). But it also recognizes limits of such links given ultimate State sanctions.

Happily, the latest ECA (1989) contribution to continuing debates about the continent's prospects also rectifies its earlier disregard of informal sectors. The African Alternative Framework notes their not insignificant contributions to "economic activity, particularly in production, distribution, finance and employment creation" and laments official policy "which has so far generally neglected or discriminated against this sector" (ECA, 1989:2). The Commission advocates a more positive response in future, including training and formal sector links, because "it is important ... to support the sector with clear policies aimed at increasing its productivity" (ECA, 1989:3). This rather economistic perspective is reinforced by relative disinterest in popular participation: just one brief paragraph and scanty references to democratic development:

> ... basic rights, individual freedom and democratic participation by the majority of the population are often lacking in Africa. This pervasive lack of democracy also makes mobilization and effective accountability difficult. This is one important sense in which Africa needs more democratic political structures in order to facilitate development (ECA, 1989:7).

but such occasional marginal disclaimers are not enough. For development to be supported and sustained it must be continuously subject to popular inputs and decisions otherwise alienation will reinforce cynicism and opposition, so diverting and undermining even well-intentioned developmental efforts. Thus the African Alternative Framework calls for external as well as internal support and for "grass-roots consultations through local authorities, private associations, including indigenous NGOs, and grassroot-level communities" (ECA, 1989:50). Yet for the Commission, such activities are assumed to be by governments to secure support through information and popularization, including co-operation between public and private sectors:

> The key role of government in this respect will embrace the creation of an enabling environment and institution-building for effective implementation and vigorous support for grassroots initiatives. On the other hand, democratization and popular participation will encourage the people to increase their development effort and to accept whatever sacrifices that may be implied by the programmes, thereby consolidating and deepening the process for national self-reliance (ECA, 1989:49-50).

Such ambivalence is unlikely to be conducive to consensus or support over the longer term: the dialectic of State-society relations is endless (see section IV), as the Bank has discovered, apparently to its surprise, in attempts to mobilize coalitions to sustain its reform conditionalities.

III. Ambiguities of external support: NGOs and informal sectors

Michael Bratton (1989a:425) has argued that "Because of the shallow penetration of society by weak State institutions, there is a relatively larger realm of unoccupied political space in Africa than anywhere else in the world". The modernization theorists' long-standing concern with pluralism has resulted in a tradition of enquiry into "interest groups". Thus the latest text by Chazan et al (1988:80-94) identifies occupational groups (professional, commercial, labour, farmers, etc.) and women's and students' associations along with traditional, religious and other voluntary organizations. But, characteristic of its genre, it fails to treat the current proliferation of either NGOs or informal groupings. Likewise, it fails to recognize the contemporary range of "green" and "grey" groups.

In short, traditional approaches fail to capture the new dynamics of informal, popular responses in Africa. As Bratton (1989b:572) notes, many agricultural, rural and welfare NGOs have developed out of necessity as African States have retreated from distant regions or difficult sectors; thus he cautions that:

> NGOs in Africa face the danger of being oversold. Their positive reputation has arisen by default - as a response to the shortcomings of State interventions - rather than from a systematic review of concrete accomplishments. Enthusiasm for NGO approaches must be tempered by the recognition that the organized voluntary sector in Africa is still extremely weak and dependent, even compared with other third world countries.

Nevertheless, despite current tensions between State and society, "Although governments and NGOs may be uncomfortable bedfellows in Africa, they are destined to cohabit" (Bratton, 1989b:585).

Such proliferation of NGOs is one element in the "trans-nationalization" of world politics, the post-war trend towards so-called "non-State" actors, particularly in the North. In fact, of course, such supposedly non-State institutions are really quasi-NGOs as they have multiple, albeit ambivalent and changeable, relations with the State. Thus idealistic, ideological projections from both modernization and materialist perspectives about the demise of the state are quite premature, whether advanced by right (market forces) or left (proletarian pressures). NGOs are more State-dominated in the South than in the North, yet even in the latter they cannot escape some regulation and supervision. In particular, developmental NGOs are continually wary of compromise and co-optation because of governmental resources and priorities.

There are now some 4,000 development NGOs in the North, concentrated in major States in the European Community and North America but also in the Nordic countries, Australasia, and Japan. They raise some $5 billion annually in the DAC countries of the OECD, equivalent to some 10 per cent of official development assistance (ODA), and disburse a further $1.5 billion as ODA agents, another 5 per cent (OECD 1988:5). At least $1 billion of this NGO aid is distributed in Africa annually, reaching significant proportions of total aid in some States (e.g., Sahel) and sectors (e.g., health).

In this post-war, essentially post-independence evolution into such prominence and responsibility, NGOs have been transformed from relief into development agencies and from volunteer senders into project managers. In the process, they have had to develop a range of policies, not only towards ODA agencies in the North, but also towards NGOs in the South, along with relations with the United Nations and International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) systems. In addition, they have revised their positions on development education and informal sectors.

The visibility and legitimacy of African NGOs has been advanced through the continental crisis. In particular, they were recognized and consulted in a series of mid-decade United Nations special sessions, particularly the 1986 United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development (UN-PAAERD) compact and subsequent late-1988 mid-term review. Such status could only be secured because of previous roles in which they had begun to fill gaps left by retreating regimes and over-stretched official donors (Quaker United Nations Office, 1988).

In response to growing activities as well as to difficulties with transnational NGOs, indigenous agencies came to establish their own pan-African institution in mid-1987 - Forum for African Voluntary Development Organizations (FAVDO). This is to have South-South and South-North dimensions as well as intra-African: inter-African solidarity is to be balanced by extra-African partnership.

Subsequently, a United Nations NGO Conference in early 1988 on" Africa Four Years On" assessed responses to the crisis, particularly prospects for grass-roots development. NGO participants were critical of structural adjustment costs and international donor disinterest. They welcomed the ECA 'Khartoum Declaration' with its emphasis on people and recognition of NGOs. They also sought a direct role for NGOs in policy formulation at national, regional and global levels:

> NGOs bear witness to the fact that at the grassroots in Africa, women and men are making the most remarkable effort to overcome the obstacles that confront them.

> In this process, NGOs can play a key role as catalysts and channels of participation (UN/NGLS, 1988b: 25).

The proliferation and expansion of NGO roles and projects has generated criticism along with complements. First, in terms of national and regional development, NGO micro-projects are hard to co-ordinate. Second, despite their best intentions, NGO aid can become habit-forming for small-scale co-operatives and other grass-roots organizations, fostering a "mendicant attitude" (Constantino, 1983:7). Third, NGOs cover a wide spectrum of values and associations, some more dubious than others. Fourth, some NGOs may have ambiguous relations with national regimes and international firms, serving to ameliorate negative effects of foreign investment. Fifth, the "small-is-beautiful" and "appropriate technology" motifs may be correct at local levels but large-scale capital is also crucial for sustained industrial development. And sixth, in a period of structural adjustment, NGO activities may be socially desirable but politically undesirable as they can facilitate the Bank/Fund project in a somewhat "counter-revolutionary" way, as Renato Constantino (1983:8) cautions:

> ... there is a tendency to romanticize or mystify the role of NGOs in effecting changes at the grass-roots level ... this presentation serves as some kind of justification for the World Bank-directed privatization and deregulation programmes ... Accordingly, a reduction of government's intervention in social services can be made up by the added participation by the NGOs. This is a dangerous proposition.

The range of problematic NGO relations and directions was identified at the United Nations NGO Conference (UN/NGLS 1988b) - North-North, South-South, South-North, NGOs-governments, NGOs-multilateral organizations, NGOs-other grass-roots groups etc. This discussion also raised some implications of myriad responses to crisis and adjustment, with important methodological and political implications:

> The NGO panel on grass-roots responses to the crisis in Africa gave lie to the image of Africa as an overwhelmed and paralysed region. The experiences ... (of) grass-roots movement organizing to tackle the problems that beset them are simply not captured in the invariably gloomy official statistics.
>
> Although the role of NGOs in Africa is increasingly recognized as legitimate, there is a misconception in some government circles that NGOs constitute an anti-governmental force. NGOs are not concerned with capturing State power, however, but with long-term programmes that emphasize the decentralization of economic and political power (UN/NGLS, 1988b:7 and 5).

This range of NGO-related issues was also treated at a special World Development (1987) Conference in London and at the New York and Dakar consultations in 1988. The "loss of innocence" if not idealism of NGOs, especially those in the North, means that they are now continually evaluated as well as consulted. Most bi- and multi-lateral ODA agencies now have some formal NGO liaison committee, culminating in consultative status in the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). In this process, Charles Elliott (1988) cautions that NGOs have come to emphasize "modernization goals" over "empowerment". Certainly the OECD (1988) report emphasized institutionalization, consultancies, evaluations, "think tanks" (such as ODI in London, ODC in Washington and N-SI in Ottawa), and human resource development rather than democratic development. Such "third generation" Northern NGO priorities are one correlate of greater resources and

responsibilities, along with taking into account Southern NGO sensibilities. On the one hand, then, the former may enhance legitimacy and protection for the latter. On the other hand, the latter can advance and reinforce the former's claims on ODA priorities: a tacit partnership? (OECD, 1988).

NGOs in Africa encourage and facilitate popular organizations but their own relations with African regimes are ambiguous. Moreover, African and international, typically Northern, NGOs do not always co-operate or coexist easily. First, African States remain jealous of their power, even when it is apparent that their reach is contracting and their reliance on "private" actors expanding. And second, indigenous NGOs are likewise ambivalent about dependence on the ideas, resources, structures and status of Northern NGOs. In turn, established African NGOs are somewhat shy of novel, unofficial agencies which have emerged in response to crisis and adjustment. Indeed, States and NGOs may have common cause against such upstart informal co-operatives. Any comprehensive analysis of State-society relations at the end of the twentieth century requires innovative, informed typologies of both NGOs and regimes. The prospects for popular participation vary according to different political economies and time periods, particularly related to seriousness and sequences of structural adjustment projects.

IV. Dialectics of popular participation: State and society

The problematic dialectic of State-society is likely to change as economic adjustment engenders a degree of political liberalization. But, as Bratton (1989a:425) cautions, "The State in Africa may be incompletely formed, weak, and retreating, but it is not going to either way". Conversely, the pervasive conditionalities of such adjustment make greater reliance on NGO roles and resources almost inevitable. Hence, the ongoing contradictions of State jealousy and social jeopardy. In the medium term, social reactions are likely to prevail over State reservations, at least in the new majority of States which the Bank characterizes as "strong-reformers" (World Bank & UNDP, 1989).

> This should not be taken to mean that NGOs have little room to organize autonomously for development. The reach of the African State routinely exceeds its grasp... NGOs have an important role to play in political development...their impact should be evaluated, not purely in terms of economic growth and social welfare, but also with regard to the strengthening of civil society (Bratton, 1989b:585).

The continuing contradictions of informal-formal sectors cannot be resolved by legal or fiscal changes alone. The former has always existed in every economy. The real issue is how extensive or counter-hegemonic it is. It tends to be most expansive in periods of socio-economic difficulty and most diminished at times of relative stability. Such global or national cycles tend to be more influential than legislative or punitive measures, which typically serve to merely drive it further underground. Conversely, more formal albeit small-scale social organization is most possible at times of economic expansion. Thus the scale and status of informal sectors and their political structures tend to be a function not so much of regime definition as of economic condition. In Africa in particular, the economic shocks of the 1980s - energy, ecology and economy - have stimulated, indeed compelled, a rich variety of informal responses. In general, we may expect such dynamic to be more apparent in political economies which the Bank defines as "strong-reformers" (or ex-reformers) than in "weak" or "non" reformers (World Bank & UNDP, 1989:27-33).

One crucial correlate of democratic development in Africa as elsewhere, particularly in a period of substantial social upheaval, is that of social differentiation. This tends to increase in periods of contraction, when downward mobility produces an expansion of informal sectors. Orthodox formal democracy requires a strong national bourgeoisie, which remains embryonic in most African political economies despite adjustment. As fractions other than the national have appeared and prospered through the expansion and intervention of the State – bureaucratic, comprador, military, political, technocratic, etc. – so they have come to depend on and to defend its continued centrality. As Bratton (1989a:422–423) comments:

> The absence of a true bourgeoisie has blocked the emergence, not only of capitalism in Africa, but also of democracy. Because the nascent middle classes depend on the state for economic survival, they attach an inestimably high premium to capturing and maintaining state power. ... Their immediate interest is to limit rather than promote opportunities for political competition.

Thus we might expect to find more popular participation in the more capitalist political economies, whether the containment of their States is a function of class struggle or structural adjustment. Some support for such a perspective is found in Bratton's own work on NGOs in Africa, admittedly a rather institutional definition of informal politics, as they tend to be concentrated in countries of either greatest developmental need or largest national bourgeoisies. Thus in the list of top four NGO hosts in Africa are Kenya (400) and Zimbabwe (80), along with another pair in most need in the 1980s, Uganda (94) and Ethiopia (46). Other relatively capitalist states like Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria and Senegal (plus the special case of South Africa) also tend to have considerable concentrations of NGOs (Bratton, 1989b). This serves to support Bratton's (1989a:427) hypothesis that "associational life is likely to be most developed in economies that have undergone the greatest degree of indigenous capitalist industrialization".

If we go beyond even NGO numbers as indicators of informal politics then the character of regimes becomes even more important as a causal factor. If one reason for authoritarian States in Africa is that the hegemonic fraction is not a national bourgeoisie then the dominance of State centric fractions is likely to perpetuate oppressive rule. Conversely, if structural adjustment facilitates the emergence of an indigenous, national fraction as an unintentional by-product of its social project then it may advance basic rights even if it threatens basic needs: hence the apparent contradiction of the adjustment project, but also its profound implications for the future of Africa, especially if the continent is redivided between so-called strong and weak reformers (Shaw, 1991).

Moreover, in the current revisionist context, constitutionalism has come to be concerned with democratic governance not just at national but also at local levels and not just with politics but also with economics. Issa Shivji (1989:14) has proposed a reconceptualization of constitutionalism around four rights, a perspective informed by State disregard for such elements of development:

> Right of peoples and nations to self-determination; right to democratic governance; right to organize; and right to the integrity of the person.

For constitutions to be effective in practice requires economic autonomy and political activity so that pressure on the State is maintained through popular forms of production and participation.

In an era of deindustrialization and privatization it will be increasingly problematic for either labour or the State to organize orthodox social coalitions to perpetuate traditional hegemonies. In short, established patterns of modern sector "corporatism" (Nyang'oro & Shaw, 1989) will tend to yield under pressures of adjustment to novel forms of popular organization – coalitions of women, Youth, greens and greys, if not yet gays in Africa – outside formal sector purview or purpose. These are more compatible with the dominance of national bourgeoisies rather than other indigenous fractions. Thus traditional State–society relations are in flux as the formal sector shrinks and the informal expands. No orthodox analytic approach has yet been able to capture this new dynamic which is neither interest group pluralism nor proletarian or peasant activism. Rather, both State and society need to be carefully redefined in theory as they are so being in practice in many African political economies, no matter how categorized by the Bank in terms of its own "reform" criterion.

I do not intend here to treat the "national question" or ethnicity (Shaw, 1986a) nor more anarchistic "defence", resistance or vigilante committees, all of which are coming to be redefined under conditions of adjustment. They have historically advanced forms of organization and participation. But they have also encouraged internal and international conflicts which have retarded democratic development and popular participation. Traditional patron–client networks are in jeopardy as economies and polities contract. I conclude this penultimate section by looking briefly at the decolonization of Africa's last colony – Namibia – which is gaining independence in an era of structural adjustment and popular participation: will these contexts ease or complicate its development?

Namibia represents a case study of a classic colony given its long-standing exploitation by and dependence on South Africa. Yet it is also an example of decolonization and democratic development being advanced in part by NGOs (UNDP–ICVA 1989). The major actors in the South West African conflict have been, of course, South Africa and SWAPO, in particular SADF and PLAN, along with the Western "Contact Group". But because of Namibia's distinctive legal status, NGOs have long been involved in providing support to SWAPO's external refugee and advocacy programmes as well as in providing assistance to internal victims of apartheid colonialism. Thus, at independence, the NGO community already has a track–record and status, enabling it to provide short– and longer–term redevelopment assistance not just for the economic sector but also for more political activity, such as human rights and educational organizations. Indeed, given the hiatus created by resolution 435, the NGOs have played a crucial role in maintaining momentum towards the redefinition and redevelopment of the Namibian political economy.

During the 1989–1990 interregnum, created by the coexistence of UNTAG and South West African administrations, national and international NGOs provided some continuity and direction for both transition and reconciliation. Thus the period of popular elections and constitutional development was characterized not only by myriad political parties but also by NGO activity. In particular, the established church missions had come to create indigenous NGOs co–ordinated through the Council of Churches of Namibia; and consortia of external NGOs and other aid agencies helped local organizations like the Repatriation, Resettlement and Reconstruction Committee, Namibia Literacy Programme and Namibia Development Trust. More autonomous, semi–political institutions included the Namibian National Students Organization and National Union of Namibian Workers. And the transition process spawned multiple monitoring groups such as the Churches

Information and Monitoring Service, Legal Assistance Centre, and Namibia Peace Plan. Finally, one distinctive feature of Namibia's politico-economic landscape has been the establishment of party or corporate "foundations", such as the Namib Foundation and Rossing Foundation, respectively.

In short, the very character of "apartheid colonialism" - inequality and insecurity - spawned dialectical responses - sub-regional institutions encouraged by continuous United Nations attention and advocacy, creating a rather distinctive post-independence inheritance: popular participation despite a legacy of official repression. Thus in the late-1980s, NGOs came to play important roles not only in repatriation and reconstruction but also in education, both formal and informal, health and rural development. Their post-independence roles will need to be co-ordinated with official development plans and industrial strategies and some co-ordination will be required for both national and international organizations. Their activities may come to be monitored better yet will remain essential.

Although the successor regime might prefer to finance and organize social services by itself, its ability to do so will be limited by both financial constraints and external conditionalities. Namibia has limited debt at present - circa $1 billion - but with the loss of South African and UNTAG incomes will be hard-pressed to cover myriad demands, notwithstanding ODA. Therefore, continued, even expanded, NGO roles will be essential for post-independence BHN, the fulfilment of even some of the extravagant election promises. In short, the NGOs' significant role in decolonization, in this case of Africa's last colony, is one indication of their increasing salience. They certainly did not rate such status in Ghana in 1957.

V. Redefinitions of democratic development in the 1990s: From survival to sustainability

Informal sector participation and production have increased as the continental crisis has intensified and the role and relevance of the state have diminished. Such popular democratic and developmental contributions should not be disregarded or terminated even if the crisis moderates over the next decade as structural adjustment advocates optimistically anticipate (World Bank & UNDP, 1989); instead conditionalities should be redefined away from short-term economic criterion and towards long-term ecological concerns. I turn in conclusion to the interrelations among debt, ecology and democracy: structural readjustments in political economies of a sustainable and acceptable character (Shaw, 1988).

Perhaps the most effective form of conditionality, yet one that the Bank and the Fund are disinterested in, would be that of democratic development involving the empowerment of the poor. Advocates of orthodox adjustments are perplexed that their "reforms" do not attract popular support, yet such policies increase the size of "vulnerable groups" rather than of reform coalitions. In their related tour d'horizon of The African Debt Crisis, Trevor Parfitt and Stephen Riley (1989) conclude that if patrimonialism has been a primary cause of Africa's decline then direct participation by popular organizations would serve to keep the state somewhat more honest. They advocate the satisfaction of BHN through such community groups as the primary criterion for Bank/Fund conditionality, to ensure regime accountability and to achieve sustainable development:

> ... it is only by grass-roots organization of the agrarian producers that clientalism can be broken and the groundings for a democratic and economically rational policy can be laid.
>
> ... it is the rural majority who stand at the base of the patrimonial system in two senses. First, the State appropriates most of its resources from the agrarian sector. Second, it is the rural populace who tend to receive least of the State's resources.
>
> Given the clear potential of the participatory approach ... it may be hoped that agencies with a genuine interest in a democratic and healthy Africa will embrace this opportunity to set in motion a genuine process of development (Parfitt & Riley, 1989:184 & 186).

Likewise, in the mid-1980s, a group of eminent Africans, in a successor seminar to that at Monrovia in the late-1970s which led to the Lagos Plan, in response to the question "Which Way Africa?" (1986:43) juxtaposed a trio of interrelated fundamentals - democracy, development and unity:

> The development of Africa cannot, under existing conditions, result from closer integration into the world economy ...
>
> Rigorous management of financial and monetary resources is indispensable for development and democracy in Africa and presupposed the participation of the people in the decision-making process ...
>
> Full repayment of our countries' debts would seriously mortgage our future and deprive Africa of the resources it needs to develop, while the adjustment policies involved might well destabilize the African production and social systems in the long term.

The environmental aspects of crisis and response are particularly salient as ecological deterioration is both cause and effect and hard to reverse (Shaw, 1986b). It is increasingly recognized that the continuing crisis is not just one of environment alone but has profound economic and political roots. Likewise, for any resolution to be sustainable will require environmental as well as other elements, particularly those of participation and accountability.

As any participatory NGO perspective would insist, until communities believe that they can control their own environment over a period of time they will not be concerned to protect and improve it. Local as well as global responses to environmental degradation must be judicious, involving appropriate technology, attention to gender, popular involvement and prospects of sustainability. They necessitate awareness of the role of women in sustainable development and require a protracted period of empowerment for hitherto marginal or vulnerable, yet crucial, groups. Growing pressures of population as well as pollution on land must be resisted and reversed if viable rural communities are to be assured. In particular, agri-business, contract-farming and commercial farming demands by indigenous as well as international interests need to be monitored if sustainable development is not to be precluded and postponed forever.

The relatively marginal and vulnerable may come to empower themselves in response to such intense economic and ecological pressures: feminist and green

movements in Africa. To popularize and sustain such campaigns they may advance participation, as amongst the peasants of northern Nigeria in reaction to large-scale water and wheat projects. Popular protest is a natural adjunct of popular participation, receiving encouragement as well as opposition from external interests, notably conservative versus radical forces and ecological versus corporate advocates. Without due regard to such responsive organizations, traditional large-scale ODA projects are likely to be isolated from and opposed by local groups representing the interests of the marginal and vulnerable. Sustainable development requires both ecological consciousness and popular participation, neither of which have been encouraged by orthodox theories of policies, but both of which are interrelated. The contemporary African State, despite all the set-backs of the crisis, still displays ambivalence about such societal changes. Yet long-term development is thereby advanced as popular participation and production respond dialectically to structural continuities and adjustments. Such changes in the continent's political economies are serving to redefine who are vulnerable and who are accountable.

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